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Whither the Soviet Leadership

Summary

The appearance of business-as-usual that Soviet officials initially maintained during Andropov's lengthy absence from public view has broken down. Signs of increased political maneuvering in the Kremlin raise the possibility that significant changes in the leadership could take place soon.

Andropov's ability to maintain or strengthen his political position will depend heavily on whether or not he is physically able to play an active leadership role. If he recovers his health it is conceivable that he could score a political breakthrough when the Central Committee meets later this month. Since the leadership appears to be fairly evenly divided, the movement or even one or two Andropov supporters into the Politburo could be quite significant in power terms.

In an attempt to place before the policy and intelligence communities provocative analyses by experienced observers, the National Intelligence Council occasionally will publish uncoordinated essays of particular merit on important subjects. This is such an essay and Soviet leadership politics is such a subject. The interpretations and conclusions are the author's own.

Comments are welcome and should be addressed to the author.

National Intelligence Council's Analytic Group [redacted] Information available as of 12 December has been used in preparation of this paper.

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If he only partially recovers his health, Andropov could remain in office for some time with reduced power, but it is unlikely that his colleagues would allow him to linger indefinitely. His domestic policy preferences have encountered significant opposition, and his foreign policy record is not above reproach. In these circumstances, a weakened Andropov would be vulnerable to forcible removal or pressure to retire voluntarily.

As things stand now, the leaders best placed to succeed Andropov are Gorbachev and Romanov--the two relatively young and apparently healthy men who are members of both the Secretariat and the Politburo. Gorbachev's chances of victory would be best if Andropov became so seriously ill that the leadership decided his condition necessitated his replacement. Currently far ahead of other contenders in terms of visible indicators of status, Gorbachev would probably be supported by a number of leaders who place a relatively high priority on domestic economic development compared to foreign policy issues. He would probably benefit from an arranged succession in which all Politburo members participated actively in the selection process.

Andropov's sudden death would increase the chances of a victory by secretary Romanov. In a "crisis" situation caused by the leader's death, especially at a time of heightened tension in US-Soviet relations, the preferences of Defense Minister Ustinov and the military in general would probably count for more than might otherwise be the case. Romanov, by virtue of career background, hard-line orientation toward the US, and identification with repressive internal policies, appears to enjoy Ustinov's backing.

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Recent signs of struggle

The appearance of business-as-usual that Soviet officials initially maintained during Andropov's lengthy absence from public view (since 18 August) has broken down. Following Andropov's failure to attend the Bolshevik Revolution ceremonies on 7 November, evidence of intensified political conflict in Moscow has surfaced:

- on 10 November, the first anniversary of Brezhnev's death, Pravda published an article lauding Brezhnev's achievements, which have been largely ignored by the media since Andropov's accession. Despite the article's favorable treatment of Andropov, its appearance suggested that Brezhnev cronies such as Secretary Chernenko and Premier Tikhonov who opposed Andropov's ascendancy were taking political advantage of the General Secretary's disability to argue in favor of continuing Brezhnev's policies rather than embarking on a new course.

- On 12 November, Soviet negotiator Kvitsinsky informally floated a new Soviet offer on INF. The same day Soviet media announced that Defense Minister Ustinov had addressed a meeting of top military officers in Moscow on 11 November. The conclave appeared to be an affair concocted by Ustinov to display the military's political support for a 28 September statement on US policy put out under Andropov's name. Ustinov reiterated Andropov's hardline position in dealing with Washington, invoking Andropov's name repeatedly. The chief military newspaper Red Star, however, dropped positive references to Andropov at the end of Ustinov's speech that were included in the radio version. On 16 November, the Soviets officially denied that Kvitsinsky had made the proposal, on 19 November an Ustinov article in Pravda reiterated the Soviet demand that British and French systems be counted in any INF agreement, and on 23 November the Soviets pulled out of the INF negotiations. Just as it is possible that the Soviet reversal on Kvitsinsky's walk-in-the-woods proposal last year represented a political defeat for Brezhnev, it is possible that the sequence of events in INF this month could be explained in terms of Soviet internal politics. In his discussion with Nitze, Kvitsinsky seemed concerned about word of their talk being spread to the full American delegation and indicated that he had to protect some higher Soviet official. Conceivably, Foreign Minister Gromyko or another leader acted without Politburo clearance to arrange for Kvitsinsky to solicit a US offer that he hoped would create pressure on hardliners within the Politburo.*
- Since the 7 November parade rumors have circulated in Moscow of an assassination attempt on Andropov. The appearance of these rumors suggests a breakdown in party discipline and an erosion of control at the top reminiscent of Brezhnev's last months in office.
- In this atmosphere, on 15 November Izvestiya printed a review of a book about the 1918 assassination attempt on Lenin. The review stated that the terrorist attack on Lenin was "highly topical even today" and contained passages that could be read to apply to the current Soviet scene (e.g., "the general situation in the country was unbelievably difficult...The revolution was less than a year old"). The timing of the article's appearance was assuredly not coincidental. Conceivably, it was planted by Andropov's opponents as grist for the rumor mill. More likely, since the article stated that the 1918 attempt on Lenin showed that a "counter-revolutionary anti-Soviet underground...existed and was active in the country," it represented a political attack on Andropov's critics.

* Other explanations for Kvitsinsky's behavior are possible, however. For example, the Soviets may have instructed him to float the new proposal in an effort to increase tensions between the US and its NATO allies. Moscow may have hoped the West Germans would buy the Soviet claim that the US team rather than Kvitsinsky initiated the proposal, without consulting Bonn beforehand.

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- During the Syrian Foreign Minister's 10-11 November visit to Moscow, the Soviets--and Gromyko in particular--for the first time unambiguously and vigorously pressured Syria to moderate its attacks on Arafat. Although other explanations are possible, it is conceivable that this move was prompted by concern on the part of Andropov's critics that he had gone too far toward giving Syria a "blank check," thereby increasing the chances of confrontation with the US. Soviet media coverage of high-level Moscow meetings with PLO officials on 22 November, however, suggested that Moscow had shifted back to reacknowledge the primacy of the Soviet relationship with Syria and to pressure Arafat to reconcile his political objectives with those of Syria.
- On 12 November the abridgment and location of a TASS release appearing in Leningradskaya Pravda suggested the possibility of an attempt to promote Secretary Romanov at the expense of Andropov.
- On 23 November, Literary Gazette published an article by Fedor Burlatsky, an associate of Andropov's, which appeared to be a thinly veiled attack on the Soviet military and hawkish elements within the civilian leadership who opposed the efforts of Andropov and other leaders to negotiate with the US. In the guise of a discussion of President Kennedy's struggle against hawks in the US administration during the Cuban missile crisis, the article generally criticized the malevolent consequences of military meddling in policymaking and specifically could be read as criticism of the military for creating an international crisis by shooting down the Korean airliner. It seemed to portray Andropov as an embattled figure attempting to fend off military influence and reach an understanding with the US through secret diplomacy. It is conceivable, however, that the article was intended to encourage American observers to believe that unless compromises were offered to the USSR in arms control negotiations, a war party would triumph in the USSR.
- Soviet media delayed by three days announcing the date for the year-end Supreme Soviet session. Supreme Soviet meetings are routinely announced 30 days in advance, but this time the meeting scheduled for 28 December was not announced until 1 December. The delay could have been due either to controversy within the leadership or to uncertainty about whether Andropov's health would permit his participation in a Central Committee plenary meeting, which routinely precedes the Supreme Soviet gathering.

Each of these anomalies in Soviet behavior, viewed in isolation, could perhaps be explained by factors other than leadership politics. Taken together, they suggest political maneuvering at the top. A variety of interpretations could be advanced to account for the recent sequence of events, but the overall impression conveyed is one of factional struggle.

Andropov's vulnerabilities

From the outset, Andropov's precarious health has evidently imposed severe limitations on his ability to actualize the vast power that potentially

attaches to the office of General Secretary. Official Soviet statements have cited a respiratory illness as the cause of Andropov's prolonged absence; unofficial statements by various Soviet officials [redacted] have centered mainly on a kidney disease. Basing themselves on this information and on Andropov's known past medical record, [redacted] believe that Andropov is suffering from at least one of three acute illnesses: an upper respiratory infection, a relatively minor kidney disease such as kidney stones, and possibly phlebitis. None of these diseases is life-threatening and even the three in combination could not prevent Andropov from resuming his pre-August level of activity within a few months. [redacted]

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[redacted] do not rule out the possibility of a more serious disorder that would constitute an immediate danger to his life.

Beyond his physical problems, Andropov is probably vulnerable to attack on political grounds. He can point to slightly improved economic growth rates as a vindication of the tentative steps he has taken to shape a new economic strategy--his top policy priority. But there are indications that his attempt to move away from the Brezhnev status quo in domestic policy have encountered opposition:

- Andropov has apparently favored a fundamental revision of Brezhnev's indulgent cadres policies, which gave party workers virtual tenure. He has probably been supported in his effort to apply higher performance standards by many younger technocrats frustrated by the slow rate of promotions under Brezhnev, but the drive to curtail incompetence has created a degree of insecurity among many elites. The vast number of rural-based cadres may feel especially vulnerable to the increased emphasis on scientific-technical know-how as a criterion for advancement, and Ukrainian party boss Shcherbitsky has implicitly criticized placing too high a priority on technical expertise.
- Support for Andropov's anti-corruption campaign has probably been strong in the military and KGB, where concern about an erosion of official discipline has been especially keen. But many leaders have probably been apprehensive about the broader implications of the campaign. Probably already uneasy about Andropov's ties to the KGB, the appointment of a career KGB officer as First Deputy Premier, and the purge and virtual takeover of the MVD (militia) by the KGB, they would probably view a concerted campaign to purify the party as a move to enhance the KGB's role at the expense of the party apparatus. Chernenko has warned implicitly against taking the anti-corruption campaign too far, and Moscow party boss Grishin has emphasized the need to keep cadres work firmly in party hands.
- Chernenko's speeches have indicated that he disagrees with Andropov about how to keep the labor force in line. He has openly criticized the frequent use of repressive measures against workers, and Trade Union chief Shalayev--a Chernenko protege--has apparently dragged his feet in the labor discipline campaign. Chernenko probably fears, as Brezhnev evidently did, that Andropov's advocacy of greater wage differentiation and tighter control over labor mobility runs the risk of provoking serious popular unrest.

- Andropov's advocacy of a greater decentralization of economic decisionmaking and hints that the economic bureaucracy needs reorganizing have almost certainly been controversial. Such steps might reduce the power of Tikhonov and the Council of Ministers. Andropov's efforts to advance discussion of reforming the economic mechanism have met resistance from such key economic officials as Gosplan chief Baybakov.
- In nationality policy, Andropov has revived theoretical formulations associated in the past with efforts to increase cultural and political restrictions on non-Russians. By doing so, he may have provoked the opposition of party leaders in non-Russian republics such as Shcherbitsky and Kazakh party head Kunayev, who are full members of the Politburo.

Andropov's record in implementing Soviet foreign policy is not above reproach. Should any detractor choose to make the case, he could argue that the USSR during Andropov's brief tenure has lost ground vis-a-vis the US around the globe, and that foreign policy initiatives with which Andropov has personally associated himself have backfired or produced negligible results.

- The campaign to derail INF deployments--the foreign policy effort in which Andropov has most visibly involved himself--has failed, although the Soviets doubtless take heart at the spectacle of West Germany torn by greater internal dissension over national security policy than at any time in the post-war era.
- It is unlikely that Andropov made the decision to down the Korean airliner, but "objectively," as the Soviets say, he may be seen as ultimately responsible, especially for the public relations debacle that ensued (unless he was ill at the time). Some leaders are also said to be uncomfortable about the growing prominence of the military hierarchy during Andropov's tenure, a prominence highlighted by the handling of the KAL incident.
- Whatever the character and dimensions of Soviet involvement in Grenada, Andropov may be held at least indirectly accountable for not preventing the chain of events that led to the US action, which Andropov's colleagues probably believe has damaged their reputation among Third World clients, while boosting the electoral prospects of their bete noire, President Reagan. If the Soviets were involved in plotting the coup, Andropov could be vulnerable to charges of "left adventurism." If the Soviet "sin" was in failing to provide enough aid to shore up the Bishop regime, Andropov--who in his June plenum speech made an unusual explicit acknowledgement of limits to the amount of economic aid the Soviets were willing to provide Third World supplicants--could be criticized for making a major miscalculation.
- Although the Soviets almost certainly see the Middle East as a "plus" on the Andropov scorecard, signs of heightened US resolve to defend American interests overseas may have given some leaders misgivings about the extent of their commitment to Syria.

- The increased pressure Andropov has placed on East European regimes to submit to a greater measure of economic, political, and military "integration" doubtless has met with the visceral approval of his peers, but some of them may be disturbed by the resulting high state of tension between Moscow and its Warsaw Pact allies.
- Despite the fanfare surrounding the Soviet opening to China, which Andropov appears to have promoted, the Chinese have not moved on the major issues and have patched things up with the US somewhat.

The alignment of forces on the Politburo

Until now, the Politburo has appeared to be fairly evenly divided into two groupings. Andropov has apparently drawn support from leaders who have been associated with the foreign policy-security-military-defense industry apparatus. These have seemed to include Ustinov, Romanov, First Deputy Premier Aliyev (a former KGB official) and perhaps Gromyko. Additionally, Andropov appears to have enjoyed the support of Secretary Gorbachev, whose speeches indicate that he shares Andropov's technocratic orientation and his desire to effect within-system reforms to make the economic mechanism more efficient.

Evidently ranged against these leaders has been a group of party and government-based leaders closely associated in the past with Brezhnev. These have included Chernenko, Tikhonov, Kunayev and Shcherbitsky. Shcherbitsky may have supported Andropov initially; there were several reports to that effect. Conceivably, he began to move away following the promotion of Romanov in June to the secretariat seat both men had probably coveted for years. Some reporting suggests that Moscow party boss Grishin may also be associated with this grouping.

Chernenko has been particularly vocal in publicly resisting Andropov's ascendancy (e.g., his June plenum remarks concerning "conditions for free discussion" and "comradely exchange of opinion" at meetings of the Politburo and Secretariat), as has Shcherbitsky (e.g., his extremely unusual public references to statements of Politburo members other than Andropov--Gromyko, Gorbachev, and Chernenko). But all of these leaders have evidently believed that the basic thrust of Andropov's policies posed a threat to the institutional and political interests they represent.

Although this breakdown suggests that a healthy and active Andropov would possibly command a bare majority on the Politburo, in reality his support has probably been issue-dependent in many cases, and cross currents have been discernible within the leadership. Given the strong emphasis on collectivity in leadership pronouncements since Brezhnev's death, as well as the slow progress Andropov has made in promoting clients to key positions and implementing policies he professes to favor, it seems clear that he has not been able to count on the backing of his putative supporters across the board.

In any event, leadership groupings are inherently unstable. Based as they are on each leader's perception at a given point in time of how he can best protect his power base, further his political career, and advance the policies he favors, they tend to shift as circumstances change. Andropov's death or incapacitation would create a fluid situation from which new

groupings would emerge. In fact, such groupings appear to be taking shape already.

The two main succession contenders

In one important respect the leadership is better prepared for a succession today than when Brezhnev died. There are now two relatively young and apparently healthy men who are members of both the Secretariat and Politburo--Romanov and Gorbachev. During Andropov's absence Gorbachev and Romanov are said to have taken turns chairing Politburo meetings, and there is no reason to expect the leadership to defy precedent by reaching outside the Secretariat to choose the next successor.

Although Romanov and Gorbachev appear to be allies of Andropov, if the leader is seriously ill his coalition will probably fall apart. In fact, already there are indications of policy differences between the two men that could constitute the basis for divergent political platforms designed to appeal to different interests within the leadership.

Gorbachev

In terms of visible indicators of political status, Gorbachev is far ahead of Romanov. His position has improved dramatically since Andropov took office and his responsibilities now extend far beyond his original portfolio of agriculture. He is involved in other areas of the economy, has a hand in foreign policy, and appears to be overseeing cadres--traditionally the responsibility that has offered the best opportunity for building a power base. [] observers of the 7 November Bolshevik Revolution ceremonies reported that other leaders seemed to defer to Gorbachev.

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Gorbachev's speeches and activities provide basis for speculating that he is advocating a domestic policy that combines an emphasis on agriculture and heavy industry. Although Gorbachev is a strong champion of the Food Program, in his major Lenin Anniversary speech in April he made clear that he regards heavy industry as the first priority of economic development. Gorbachev's stress on heavy industry would probably have special appeal for Tikhonov, a "metal-eater" by virtue of background and experience, and for Shcherbitsky, whose republic is a major center of metallurgy and energy development. The Ukrainian leader, like Gorbachev, has urged "utmost attention to developing the basic industrial branches, especially fuel, electric energy and metals." At the same time, Gorbachev's identification with the Food Program would help him in cultivating Kunayev, whose republic combines agriculture and heavy industry, and Chernenko, an early supporter of the Food Program.

In foreign policy, it is a good bet that Gorbachev would urge a more conciliatory posture toward the US. Gorbachev's statements during his recent trip to Canada, and his Lenin Anniversary speech, suggest that he takes a somewhat less malign view of the US than do some other leaders. His emphasis in April on the fact that "a more realistic, sober tendency" exists in the West along with the hardliners, and recognition of "considerable areas of converging interests" contrasted with Romanov's 7 November characterization of the international situation as "white hot, thoroughly white hot," and his charge that the US was using arms controls talks as a smokescreen for war preparations. The worsening of US-Soviet relations between April and

November doubtless accounted in part for the differences in the two leaders' treatment of the US. But as recently as 17 November TASS reported that Gorbachev had met with US businessmen John Crystal and that "Mikhail Gorbachev and John Crystal expressed the opinion that there are vast potentialities for mutually beneficial cooperation" and that "realization of these potentialities largely depends on the state of Soviet-American relations as a whole." Chernenko and possibly Gromyko and some other leaders would support Gorbachev if he advocated a greater effort to reach a modus vivendi with the US.

Such a Gorbachev program, then, might be backed by Chernenko, Gromyko, Tikhonov, Kunayev and Shcherbitsky--all but four of the ten Politburo members (not counting Andropov). It is entirely possible, however, that leaders who agreed with Gorbachev's apparent preferences in domestic policy would not support his inclinations in foreign policy, and vice versa.

The chief danger for Gorbachev, if this assessment is correct, would appear to be that some leaders count for more than others. In a succession taking place now, Ustinov would probably have more influence than anyone else and he would probably support Romanov.

Romanov

Romanov has maintained a much lower profile than Gorbachev since moving into the Secretariat. In this respect, Romanov's status vis-a-vis Gorbachev is similar to Andropov's status vis-a-vis Chernenko during the last months of Brezhnev's life. As happened in the last succession, however, the removal of the General Secretary as a political actor could change the picture completely.

A Romanov accession would have a number of drawbacks from the standpoint of other leaders. As early as 1972 Romanov implicitly criticized Brezhnev's policy of "stability of cadres," and he has recently urged personnel reductions for some institutions. His reputation for riding herd on subordinates in Leningrad, which had an unusually high turnover of party officials during his tenure there, could feed apprehension that his succession would portend a more precipitate change in personnel policy than Andropov has been able to effect.

Romanov also has the liability of an unsavory personal reputation. He has occasionally appeared to be inebriated at official functions, and his use of his official position to feather his nest is notorious. At a time of considerable apprehension that corruption is undermining the population's respect for the regime, Romanov's public reputation for abusing power, if not the fact of the abuses, could work against him. Shcherbitsky's recent admonition that public opinion should be taken into account in making official appointments could be relevant in this context.

Romanov appears to have one major asset, however, that could outweigh his liabilities: Ustinov's favor. Like fellow Leningrader Ustinov, Romanov is part of an influential and tightly knit network of officials with backgrounds in defense industry--a coterie that has received more promotions since Andropov's accession than any other grouping. Romanov is a graduate of a shipbuilding institute and for ten years served as party boss of Leningrad--a major center for high-technology defense industries. Not surprisingly, he

evidently has responsibility within the Secretariat for defense industry, Ustinov's portfolio for many years. At a minimum, Ustinov had a veto power over Romanov's appointment to this position, and it is likely that he rather than Andropov instigated Romanov's move. Romanov is also said to have good relations with some professional military officers, including naval chief Admiral Gorshkov.

Romanov's policy views appear to be compatible with those of Ustinov. He has taken a consistently hard line toward the US over the years, and he stands out as a strong advocate of law and order at home. His record in repressing dissent in Leningrad and the strong emphasis on labor discipline in his speeches are probably in line with the preferences of Ustinov, not to mention Aliyev.

Potential role of the military

Although there is no persuasive evidence that the military has intervened directly to determine the outcome of any previous succession, there are grounds for questioning whether this historical pattern will hold. The military's influence appears to have expanded over the past several years and especially since the advent of Andropov:

- At home, the waning of ideology, the deepening of economic problems, and the trend toward ossification within the party have increased the importance of the military as a symbol of national unity.
- Globally, the USSR is no longer a model for economic development or ideological inspiration for modernizing nations, and depends to a greater degree than ever before on military power to further its objectives. The growing role of military assistance as an instrument of policy in the Third World and the increased reliance on the threat of military force to bolster Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, as well as the central importance of technical arms control issues in Soviet strategy toward the West, have necessarily entailed greater military participation in foreign policymaking.
- Under Andropov, the heightened visibility of military figures as regime spokesmen, the promotion to marshal of several members of the high command whose positions would not seem to merit this rank, and several clandestine reports have suggested a further rise in the military's prestige and influence over policy.

At the same time, there have been indications that some of the professional military may have misgivings about the party's capacity to provide effective leadership consistent with military interests.

- Before Brezhnev's death some generals seemed apprehensive that the country's economic problems could lead civilian leaders to question the military priority in resource allocations.
- Some reporting suggests that some military officers believe the party has become too "flabby" and corrupt to tighten popular discipline and get the country moving again.

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-- The Jaruzelski "solution" to Poland's problems is said to have aroused keen interest in Soviet military circles.

Nevertheless, it seems improbable that the military would attempt to dictate the succession through the threat of physical force:

- Throughout Soviet history military officers have been indoctrinated to stand aloof from politics.
- Party bodies with oversight and control functions permeate the military at all levels.
- There is a substantial congruence of outlook among many top military and civilian leaders. The military probably would not see a need for decisive action to ensure the selection of an acceptable candidate, if not their preferred choice.
- Ustinov's primary loyalty is presumably to the party and he most likely would refrain from heavy-handed intimidation of his colleagues along Polish lines.

Under certain circumstances, however, military influence over the selection process could be brought to bear in a less direct fashion. If one or another candidate were to urge changes that would lower military priorities in Soviet policy, for example, Ustinov would be in a position to challenge his program on national security grounds. Since many Politburo members lack technical expertise and access to classified military information, they might defer to Ustinov's judgment. The KGB and the GRU could conceivably play a supporting role by selectively releasing intelligence reports portraying the national security threat in dire terms.

Possible developments

(1) The possibility that there actually was an assassination attempt on Andropov cannot be excluded out of hand. If an attempt did take place and wounded Andropov but not seriously, as the rumors have it, he might be able to use the attack as a justification for purging some of his opponents--say, Chernenko and Tikhonov. Such a strategy was suggested by the Izvestiya article of 15 November. Andropov's ability to capitalize on an assassination attempt would be enhanced if the perpetrator were an individual associated in some way with any of his opponents.

(2) In the absence of an assassination attempt, it is still possible that Andropov could score a political breakthrough at the plenum. Assuming that during his illness one or more leaders made a move to subvert his policies, Andropov might be able to charge his opponents with violation of Politburo discipline and use this as a rationale for changes in the leadership. This outcome would be dependent, of course, on his recovering his health.

Although Andropov has not yet been able to make major changes in the Politburo, changes at the level just below the Politburo have set the stage for shifts at the top. For instance, six men now hold positions that have at various times in the past merited full membership on the Politburo: Party

Control Commission Chairman Solomentsev, RSFSR Premier Vorotnikov, Leningrad party boss Zaykov, KGB chief Chebrikov, Trade Union chief Shalayev, and Belorussian party boss Slyunkov. All but one of these men were promoted to their current positions since Andropov's accession and are indebted to him politically. The movement of one or two of these or possibly other individuals could be quite significant for Andropov in power terms, since the Politburo appears to be fairly evenly divided.

(3) If Andropov partially recovers his health, he could remain in office for some time but with reduced political power. To the extent that other leaders viewed him as a transitional figure, he would be unable to marshall the resources to effect significant personnel changes or to push through any comprehensive program to redress the country's accumulated problems. Under these circumstances, Soviet policy probably would be characterized by continuity at best, and immobilism at worst. Conceivably, however, Andropov's debility would produce not greater collectivity but greater compartmentation of power and division of responsibilities within the leadership, which could lead to shifts in particular policy areas.

If Andropov is unable to provide full-time leadership, however, it seems unlikely that his colleagues will allow him to linger on indefinitely. It is true that Brezhnev's infirmities did not lead to his retirement but he had been party chief for years and was well entrenched in his position by the time his physical decline began.

(4) Andropov's sudden death would increase the chances of a Romanov victory. Two of Gorbachev's likely supporters, Shcherbitsky and Kunayev, are provincial figures who probably would not be drawn into the initial deliberations about a successor if Andropov died suddenly. Moreover, in a "crisis" situation caused by the leader's death, especially at a time of heightened tension in US-Soviet relations, military preferences would probably count for more than might otherwise be the case.

(5) If Andropov had become so seriously ill that the leadership decided his condition necessitated his replacement, Gorbachev's chances of victory would increase. Under these circumstances, Andropov himself might play a role in the decision, and he appears to favor Gorbachev--perhaps because he regards an innovative approach toward the economy as the most vital qualification for a party leader at this juncture. Moreover, in an arranged succession of this sort all Politburo members would probably participate in the selection process.